

ENVIRONMENT, HISTORICAL LANDMARKS, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

Throughout the study a major concern was the effects of development on the environment. Any proposed facility on new location whether it is a bridge or highway will have a direct effect on its surroundings. Since a major resource for Jackson County is cropland, it is desirable to limit any unnecessary highway development in rural areas. Any proposed project, whether it is a new facility or simple widening will have an environmental evaluation conducted to determine the projects impact on its surrounding environment.

The thoroughfare plan has taken into consideration several historical landmarks. Fourteen historical locations are scattered throughout Jackson County. All fourteen sites are included on the National Register.

Further steps were taken in conserving endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. The N.C. Natural Heritage Program provided information and listings of elements (rare species, geologic features, natural communities, special animal habitats) known to occur in the geographic area of interest. Federal and State laws protect most endangered plant and wildlife with conservation acts. It was therefore necessary to work with the National Heritage Program in avoiding interference or disturbance of any natural habitation.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The North Carolina Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was organized to inform North Carolina citizens of any developments in the State Highway System. Approved by the Board of Transportation, the Department encourages any local input into the planning process for the TIP.

The highway portion of the TIP includes some of the projects needed to complete the remaining 1,704 miles of four-lane highways on the 3,600 mile Intrastate System. Once completed, 96 percent of the State's citizens will be within 10 miles of a modern four-lane highway. The program also contains multi-lane connector routes and loop roads around seven of the State's major urban areas. In addition, projects that address the most critical local and regional transportation needs are included in the program - to the extent available funding would allow.

The following is a list of projects that are scheduled in the 1994-2000 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Jackson County.

1. US 19 - Cherokee to Maggie Valley. Upgrade existing two lane facility from 20' to 24' pavement width. Ten foot paved shoulder improvements are included. (Scheduled for Right-of-Way protection, TIP #: R-2209)